



SPECIAL MEETING OF COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH ON WEDNESDAY 17TH APRIL 2013 AT 5.00 PM

PRESENT:

Councillor Mrs. G. Oliver - Mayor
Councillor D.M. Gray - Deputy Mayor

Councillors:

Miss. L. Ackerman, M. Adams, H.A. Andrews, A.P. Angel, Mrs. K.R. Baker, Mrs. G. Bevan
J. Bevan, P.J. Bevan, L. Binding, Mrs. A. Blackman, D. Bolter, D.G. Carter, Mrs. P. Cook,
C.J. Cuss, H.W. David, W. David, H.R. Davies, D.T. Davies, R.T. Davies, K. Dawson, N. Dix,
Mrs. D. Ellis, C. Elsbury, Mrs. C. Forehead, Ms E. E. Forehead, J.E. Fussell, Mrs. J. Gale,
L. Gardiner, N. George, C.J. Gordon, R.W. Gough, Mrs. P. Griffiths, D.T. Hardacre,
D. Havard, C. Hawker, A.G. Higgs, M.P. James, G. Johnston, Mrs. B.A. Jones, G. Jones,
Ms. J.G. Jones, S. Kent, G. Kirby, A. Lewis, K. Lloyd, C.P. Mann, S. Morgan,
Mrs. R. Passmore, D.V. Poole, D.W.R. Preece, M.J. Prew, Mrs. D. Price, J. Pritchard,
Mrs. J.A. Pritchard, D. Rees, K.V. Reynolds, R. Saralis, Mrs. M.E. Sargent, Mrs. E. Stenner,
Mrs. J. Summers, J. Taylor, L.G. Whittle, T.J. Williams, R. Woodyatt

Together with:-

N. Barnett (Acting Chief Executive), S. Aspinall (Acting Deputy Chief Executive), D. Street
(Acting Director of Social Services), N. Scammell (Acting Director of Corporate Services),
G. Williams (Monitoring Officer/Principal Solicitor), D. Perkins (Head of Legal and Democratic
Services), K. Cole (Interim Manager, Learning, Education and Inclusion), D. Jones (Health
and Safety Manager), B. Hopkins (Assistant Director Our Schools Our Future), L. Donovan
(HR Service Manager, Customer Services), P. Evans (Head of ICT Services), T. Mayer
(Assistant Director - Planning and Strategy), H. Morgan (Senior Committee Services Officer)

Also In Attendance - Mr. Gary Thomas, Chair of Governors

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs. E.M. Aldworth, Mrs. A. Collins,
C. Durham, G.J. Hughes, K. James, J.E. Roberts and J. Taylor.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors D. Bolter, Mrs. P. Griffiths and D.W.R. Preece declared an interest in relation to
the report on Cwmcarn High School. Details are minuted with the respective item.

REPORT OF OFFICERS

Consideration was given to the following report.

3. CWMCARN HIGH SCHOOL

Councillors D. Bolter, Mrs. P. Griffiths and D.W.R Preece declared an interest (as his son works for Santia Ltd., as her grand daughter is a pupil at the School and as a School Governor respectively) and left the Chamber when the item was being discussed.

Consideration was given to the report which sought approval from Members to determine their preferred option to provide continuing education for Cwmcarn High School pupils for the next academic year.

Mrs. Aspinall (Acting Deputy Chief Executive) advised that the report outlines the background to the decision to temporarily close the School site back in October and the decision of Council to fund the relocation of Cwmcarn School to Ebbw Vale. It advised of the issues surrounding the various reports produced relating to asbestos in the School and gave options to determine the way forward. Members were advised that the Council took the unprecedented step of employing an independent expert to analyse the scientific data and results of both the Santia and the HSL reports and a summary of the findings from Robin Howie Associates were appended to the report. The asbestos remedial options commissioned by the School Governing Body from Ensaf Consultants was also appended to the report. From the findings it has been concluded that a return to the Cwmcarn High School site cannot be safe for pupils or staff without the abatement and remediation work being carried out as identified in the Ensaf Management Survey report of March 2013.

Members were reminded that whilst recognising the uncertainty that has been caused for parents, pupils, governors and staff of Cwmcarn High School, the Council refutes the accusations that the situation has been manufactured to ensure Cwmcarn High School is closed as part of the 21st Century School rationalisation programme. These accusations are totally without foundation and should therefore be disregarded by Members. There is a separate process underway, the outcome of which will be considered by Council in the coming months. The two issues are totally unrelated and must remain so.

Reference was then made to paragraph 5 of the report which set out the range of options for consideration and Mrs. Aspinall outlined each of the proposals in detail:-

- Option 1 - Do nothing
- Option 2 - Dispersal of Cwmcarn High School pupils to other sites whilst 21st Century Schools rationalisation evaluation is considered.
- Option 3 - Provide accommodation to return learners to the Cwmcarn High School site whilst remediation work is being undertaken on part of the School site.
- Option 4 - Remediate the site as proposed by the Ensaf Management Survey - this option deals only with urgent asbestos remediation and removal.
- Option 5 - Remediate the site as proposed by the Ensaf Management Survey plus all statutory maintenance works.

The financial implications as detailed in the report were outlined and it was pointed out that in order to find the £1.048m required, £400k is available from previous underspend and it is recommended that the £648k required be funded from General Fund. The Council will enter into a grant arrangement with the Governors of Cwmcarn High School where they will procure, commission and manage the works at the School. The School will also be responsible for any additional works or funds needed above the agreed amount and in accordance with the relevant legislation for insuring the School site.

Mr. Gary Thomas, Chair of Governors, then addressed the Members and extended his gratitude that funding for temporarily accommodation had been made available in order to secure the use of Ebbw Vale Campus by pupils and staff. He advised that the preference of the Governing Body is option 4 (remediate the site as proposed by the Ensafe Management Survey) which, if accepted, will allow the School to reopen fully in September. He accepted that this option will only deal with urgent asbestos remediation and removal and make the School safe for re-occupation. In concluding he requested that in the best interest of the pupils and teachers option 4 be supported.

Mr. Thomas commended the support of Officers, parents, pupils and the community and, during the course of the debate, this was reiterated by those present.

During the course of the ensuing debate reference was made to the reports that had been received and Members accepted the experts findings as appended to the report and were advised of ongoing discussion with the HSE on its findings and would be seeking a wider debate with Welsh Government. Reference was also made to the commitment that the works would be completed to ensure the School can be re-occupied in September 2013 and it was explained that as there are parts of the School that can be occupied it would be possible to accommodate this proposal. A query was also raised with regards to the School being responsible for any additional works or funds needed above the agreed amount and it was noted that Officers would be working closely with both the School and Ensafe to monitor the situation.

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the report, and in order to ensure arrangements are in place to support continuity in teaching and learning for all Cwmcarn High School pupils with effect from the 2013/14 academic year, Option 4 (remediation of the site as proposed by Ensafe Management Survey) be supported at a cost of £1,048m with the funding being met from General Fund balances (net of previous underspend).

The meeting closed at 6.00 pm.

Approved as a correct record and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 23rd April 2013 they were signed by the Mayor.

MAYOR